

# INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGY FROM JONES TO MARSHALL (1784-1902)

By SOURINDRANATH ROY

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NO spectacular event<sup>1</sup> comparable in its dramatic significance with either the discovery of the Rosetta Stone or the opening up of the lost city of Pompeii inaugurated the birth of archaeological studies in India. It had a much humbler and less sensational beginning, having received its first impulse from the somewhat amateurish efforts of an enthusiastic band of antiquarians, who, ably guided by Sir William Jones, formed, on the 15th January 1784, under the name of the Asiatic Society,<sup>2</sup> an institution for enquiring, among other things, 'into the History . . . the Antiquities, Arts, Sciences and Literatures of Asia'. There had been others in India before Sir William<sup>3</sup> devoting their spare time to the study of antiquities. But their efforts were mostly of a desultory character, and it is doubtful if their interest in antiquities was more than that of the dilettantes in the curious, the beautiful and the old. It was Sir William's great achievement not only to realize for the first time the need for co-ordinating these efforts but to find the means by which this co-ordination could be effected and further investigations

<sup>1</sup> An event of great significance which, had it been followed up, might have led to important discoveries, took place a little before April 1786, when a Madras peasant found below the ruins of a Hindu temple near Nellore a number of Roman coins and medals belonging to the second century A.D. *Asiatick Researches*, II (1790), p. 331. But little notice appears to have been taken of the incident.

<sup>2</sup> Prominent among the sponsors of the Society was Warren Hastings, on whom, ten years earlier, no less a personage than Dr. Johnson had impressed the need for taking up archaeological investigations in India. Dr. Johnson's letter to Hastings on the subject, dated 30 March 1774, is reproduced in pl. I. (Original in British Museum Additional Manuscripts, 29196, 1b-2, microfilm copy available in the National Archives of India.)

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the descriptions of Bijāpur in Tavernier, of Agra and Delhi in Finch and Bernier, of the cave-temples in west India in Thevenot, Careri, Fryer, Ovington, Hamilton, and Anquetil du Perron, the general account of Indian monuments in Joseph Tieffenthaler and the description of Mahābalipuram by William Chambers, who had surveyed it in 1772 and 1776. *Asiatick Researches*, I (1778), p. 145.



could be pursued on systematic lines. Once started, the Society thrived rapidly, and contributions commenced pouring in upon it from all quarters announcing new finds or new interpretations of materials already known. A journal, the *Asiatick Researches*, was started in 1788 to make public the results of these new efforts, and a museum was set up in 1814 to house the objects collected by the Society's growing band of workers. The start made in Bengal was soon followed up in other parts of India and 'Literary Societies' modelled on the Asiatic Society made their appearance in Bombay and Madras.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. ARCHAEOLOGY IN CLOSET

The aims of these pioneers in archaeology were, however, far from purely archaeological. Their very programme, which embraced an endless variety of subjects, ranging from ethnology to pure mathematics, from geology to meteorological observations, would belie their having any such aim. They were, as could only be expected, innocent of all archaeological techniques, whether of survey or of excavation or of interpretation. More practised in literary researches, they seemed inclined to place a far greater reliance on man's literary remains than on the material vestiges left by him. It is, therefore, no wonder that the activities of the pioneers were more or less confined to the translation and expounding of ancient books and inscriptions or to highly speculative dissertations, the worst examples of which are perhaps provided by Francis Wilford's fantastic interpretations of the Ellora and Salsette inscriptions and his still wilder series of pseudo-antiquarian studies, published between 1792 and 1822, in which important fragments of information are found embedded in a mass of crude conjectures.<sup>2</sup> Not that the value of ancient monuments was totally disregarded by these pioneers. There were among them travelling antiquarians who gave glowing accounts of the wonders of Ellora, of the massive grandeur of the Qutb Minār or the ethereal beauty of the Tāj Maḥal. But everything was vague and romantic. There were few measurements and no plans. Even those who, like H.T. Colebrooke, could realize that 'in the scarcity of authentic materials for the ancient and even the modern history of the Hindu race', the importance 'attached to all genuine monuments was amply justified' also believed that the function of the monuments was only to elucidate 'the scattered information which can yet be collected from the remains of Indian literature'.<sup>3</sup>

Yet when all is said, it is difficult to overestimate the contribution made to the cause of Indian archaeology by these early enthusiasts whom Cunningham picturesquely called 'closet archaeologists'.<sup>4</sup> First and foremost stands the name of Sir William Jones himself, who, by his brilliant identification of Chandragupta Maurya with Sandrokottos of Greek historians, established the first positive date in Indian archaeology which remained for many years to come 'the sole firm ground in the quicksands of Indian history'. At the same time he located the site of the classical Palibothra at the confluence of the Gangā and the Son and was thus able to provide a starting point from which the future explorer of ancient Indian geography could pursue his investigations.<sup>5</sup> Equally remarkable were the researches of his colleague Charles Wilkinson, to whom belongs the credit of

<sup>1</sup> The Literary Society of Bombay was started in 1804 and that of Madras in 1818.

<sup>2</sup> F. Wilford, 'Account of some ancient inscriptions', *Asiatick Researches*, V (1798), p. 136; 'On Egypt and other countries . . . from the ancient books of the Hindus', *ibid.*, III (1792), p. 295; 'A dissertation on Semiramis . . . from the Hindu sacred books', *ibid.*, IV (1795), p. 363, etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, IX (1807), p. 398.

<sup>4</sup> A. Cunningham, *Arch. Surv. Ind. Rep.*, I (Simla, 1871), p. xviii.

<sup>5</sup> *Asiatick Researches*, IV, p. 11.



deciphering the Gupta as well as the *kufila* script,<sup>1</sup> and of thus laying the foundation of Indian epigraphical studies. The methods of epigraphical researches were put even on a more scientific basis by H. T. Colebrooke, Jones's successor to the presidency of the Asiatic Society and his equal in scholarship in Sanskrit and the classical languages, and by H. H. Wilson, the next president, whose *Ariana Antiqua* will remain a permanent monument to the painstaking researches he had carried out on the antiquities of Afghanistan.

In western India Sir Charles Warre Malet broke a new ground by publishing in 1794 a paper on the Ellora caves with drawings by Lt. Manby.<sup>2</sup> He was followed by Salt, who, in 1806, wrote an account of the Kanheri and Salsette caves illustrated by drawings and copies of sculptures.<sup>3</sup> In 1813 William Erskine, Secretary of the Bombay Literary Society, drew up an exhaustive essay on the Elephanta caves, in which he anticipated the period when vague and glowing accounts would give place to accurate descriptions and detailed plans.<sup>4</sup> In Madras, the leading antiquarian of this period was Collin Mackenzie, an ardent collector of archaeological material, whose collection of inscriptions, acquired by many years' assiduous labour numbered more than eight thousand and whose drawings of antiquities went to fill ten large folio volumes.<sup>5</sup>

All these were the results of individual efforts in which the Government of the day took little or no interest. But a change was presaged in 1800, when Francis Buchanan (later Buchanan-Hamilton) was deputed by Marquis of Wellesley to conduct a survey of Mysore. The completed report embodied interesting notices of the antiquities of the country, the first to be published under official auspices.<sup>6</sup> In 1807 Buchanan was instructed by the Supreme Government to undertake a further survey embracing 'the whole of the territories subject to the immediate authority of the Presidency of Fort William' as well as 'the adjacent countries' and covering, among other matters, topography, history and antiquities.<sup>7</sup> For eight years Buchanan pursued his investigations in the Districts of Dinājpur, Rangpur, Purnēā, Bhāgalpur, Bihar, Shāhābād and Gorakhpur, when his labours were brought to an abrupt close. The reports of these surveys which, for the most part, remained unpublished<sup>8</sup> covered no less than thirtyseven volumes in addition to four volumes embodying over five hundred architectural and sculptural drawings and copies of sixtytwo inscriptions, quite a large number of which were from Bodh-Gayā. Buchanan was among the first to realize the value of detailed plans and exact measurements of ancient buildings and historic sites. His archaeological reconnaissances in eastern India were remarkable for sound judgment and conscientious

<sup>1</sup> *Asiatic Researches*, I (1788), pp. 131 and 279; II, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, VI (1799), p. 389.

<sup>3</sup> *Trans. Literary Soc. Bombay*, I (1819), p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 198. Erskine is better known as the translator of Bābur's *Memoirs*.

<sup>5</sup> H. H. Wilson, *Mackenzie Collection, a Descriptive Catalogue of Oriental Mss. etc.* (Calcutta, 1828).

<sup>6</sup> *A Journey through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar performed under the orders of the Marquis of Wellesley for the express Purpose of Investigating into the State of Agriculture . . . the National and Civil History and Antiquities in the Dominions of the Raja of Mysore and the Countries acquired by the Hon'ble East India Company*, 3 vols. (London, 1807).

<sup>7</sup> Bengal Government letter, dated 11th September 1807, and Pub. Desp. from the Court, dated 7th January 1807. Cunningham is responsible for the origin of the belief that 'the instructions given to Buchanan included neither history nor antiquities of the country'. *Op. cit.*, p. iv.

<sup>8</sup> It is not easy to form an idea of the quality of Buchanan's work from Montgomerie Martin's eviscerated transcript of his mss. Martin's illustrations are generally poor representations of the originals. See G. R. Kaye and E. H. Johnston, *European Manuscripts in the India Office Library*, II, pt. ii (London, 1937), pp. 156-75.



accuracy, and when Cunningham, many years later, visited the places described by Buchanan he was struck by the meticulous minuteness and strict accuracy of the latter's descriptions.

The hope raised by Buchanan's splendid work of official participation in archaeological activities remained unfulfilled for several decades to come, and the Government continued to be insensible to the need for either continuing the survey of ancient monuments or adopting suitable measures for their preservation. From time to time a Governor-General, in an access of exceptional enlightenment, would spare a little money for the fitful repair of one monument or another. For example, Lord Minto appointed a committee to conduct repairs at the Tāj, and Moira ordered conservation-work at Fatehpur Sikri and Sikandara, while at Lord Amherst's instance elaborate repairs were undertaken at the Qutb Minār. But these spasmodic efforts amounted to little, and of a well-articulated plan to protect the historic sites and buildings against ravages by nature or man there was as yet scarcely any sign. The Bengal Regulation XIX of 1810<sup>1</sup> no doubt invested the Government with power to intervene whenever any public edifice was exposed to the risks of misuse by private individuals, but the law was ineffective when a State official ordered the dismantlement of a monument or a Governor-General himself took steps to sell it by public auction.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGY COMES TO THE FIELD

From the stagnancy which threatened its very existence archaeology was saved by the genius and labours of a remarkable man, James Prinsep,<sup>3</sup> Assay-master, Calcutta Mint, who, from his appointment in 1833 as the Secretary of the Asiatic Society, assumed the virtual direction of the entire archaeological work in India. By training and inclination Prinsep was essentially a man of science, and he brought to bear on his task a scientific love of orderliness and precision and the scientists' mastery of factual details, which enabled him to march from discovery to discovery with a swiftness that still appears amazing. Among his most remarkable achievements was the unlocking, between 1834 and 1837, of the mystery of the Brāhmī and the Kharoshthī scripts, thus removing the thick crust of oblivion which, for many centuries, had concealed the character and language of the earliest Indian inscriptions. The decipherment of the inscriptions of Piyadasi, leading to the identification of that ruler with Emperor Aśoka, and the establishment of his

<sup>1</sup> Sections iii and v, which are repeated almost verbatim in Madras Regulations VII of 1817.

<sup>2</sup> Under Lord Hastings it was decided to take away the marble bath in Shāh Jahān's palace for a gift to George IV. This was later sold by public auction under Lord Bentinck's orders. During the latter's administration the Tāj was on the point of being destroyed for the value of its marbles, and a proposal was made to lease the gardens at Sikandara to the Executive Engineer at Agra for speculative cultivation. For other examples, see Fergusson, *History of Architecture in all Countries* (London, 1867), II, pp. 458, 605 and 698; E. C. Bayley's unpublished note to J. D. Gordon, Aug. 1867, Pub. 6, Sep. 1867, 41. (This and other official documents referred to below are, unless otherwise stated, preserved in the National Archives of India.)

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. vii-ix; Hugh Falconer in *Colonial Magazine*, Dec. 1840; Prinsep, *Essays on Indian Antiquities*, ed. E. Thomas, 2 vols. (London, 1858); *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1908), XVI. Before embarking on his archaeological career Prinsep had published several architectural works of major importance. In 1831 he had started *Gleanings in Science* in conjunction with Major Herbert, which, on the 7th March 1832, changed its name into *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.



contemporaneity with Antiochus III and Ptolemy Philadelphos helped to place Indian archaeology for the first time on a secure chronological basis.

A master in epigraphical and numismatic interpretation, Prinsep showed equal clear-sightedness in emphasizing the value of accurate field-survey<sup>1</sup> and precise recording, a predilection for which he had demonstrated as early as 1820 by executing a series of accurate plans and drawings of the streets and buildings of Banaras. His public duties as Assay-master, combined with his epigraphical pre-occupations, left him little time to conduct such surveys personally. But he encouraged others to undertake similar operations and took initiative in interpreting and publishing their results as soon as they were available. He was among the first to appreciate the great significance of the excavations carried out by Generals Ventura and Court in the Manikyāla *stūpa* in 1830 and in similar remains in the Indus-Jhelum region in 1833 and 1834,<sup>2</sup> which brought to light not only huge hoards of Buddhist relics and sculptures but coins and inscriptions revealing the existence of a new family of rulers, the Kushans. By calling attention to the results of these as well as other excavations carried out by Masson in Jalālābād and by Cunningham in Sārnāth,<sup>3</sup> he amply demonstrated what could be achieved by the combination of laborious exploration in the field with patient research in the closet.

Yet it would be untrue to say that either Prinsep or any of his colleagues understood the correct function of fieldwork, which was with them, as with many of their successors, a mere means to obtain plans of old buildings, new art-treasures, coins and epigraphic records. The main object of the early excavators was to discover objects which would grace museums rather than to procure the evidence that would reveal a civilization. In this respect the Indian archaeologist was no better inspired than his colleagues in the Near East, who would rifle a Mesopotamian *tell* to find Assyrian sculptures and an Egyptian tomb to discover papyri.

The premature death of Prinsep on the 20th April 1840, at the age of forty, left Indian archaeology without a leader, and though the impulse given by him was not lost, the progress of research, which during his life-time had been conducted as one great voyage under his sole command, became limited to lesser expeditions in various directions. Of his successors during this interregnum the most prominent were James Fergusson, Markham Kittoe,<sup>4</sup> Edward Thomas<sup>5</sup> and Cunningham<sup>6</sup> in north India, Sir Walter

<sup>1</sup> Prinsep was the first Indian antiquarian to use the term 'field archaeology'. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, III (1834), pp. 313, 436 and 556.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 152 and 329; *Proc. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, 1836, p. 588.

<sup>4</sup> Kittoe's principal works include the discovery of the Dhaulī rock-edict, his survey of the *viḥāras* and *chaityas* in Gayā and his excavations at Sārnāth in 1852. He died in 1853 when scarcely forty. For his works see *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, VII (1838), pp. 531, 679 and 1060; XVI (1847), pp. 272 and 334; Cunningham, *op. cit.*, pp. xxiv-xxvii and 124-25.

<sup>5</sup> Besides continuing the Sārnāth excavation begun by Kittoe, Thomas made significant contributions to Indian numismatics. See his numerous articles in *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal* and in *Numismata Orientalia*, started by him in 1874.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Cunningham (1814-93): Second Lieutenant, Bengal Engineers, 1831; Aide-de-Camp to Auckland, 1836; Executive Engineer to the King of Oudh, 1840; at Gwalior, 1844-45; Field Engineer, First Sikh War, 1846, and Second Sikh War, 1848-49; Chief Engineer in Burma, 1856-58, in N.-W. Provinces, 1858-61; retired as Major General, 1861. Helped Prinsep materially in his investigations on the Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythic dynasties and added much useful information on the subject after the latter's death. Explored a large number of *stupas* in Bhilsā, *Bhilsa Topes* (London, 1854), and contributed numerous articles to *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc.* and *Numismatic Chronicles*.



Elliott<sup>1</sup> in south India and Colonel Meadows Taylor,<sup>2</sup> Dr. Stevenson<sup>3</sup> and Dr. Bhau Daji in western India, each following his own line of work without any attempt at co-ordination. But special importance attaches to the researches of Fergusson, who, between 1829 and 1847, conducted an extensive survey of the different types of ancient buildings in India. He not only compiled the first illustrated history of Indian architecture<sup>4</sup> but evolved a system of classification of buildings which, for many years, remained the only tool for architectural surveys with his successors in the field.

### 3. THE BIRTH OF A NEW CONSCIENCE

The period following Prinsep's death was fruitful in a more significant way: it witnessed the first deliberate attempt made by the State to take an active interest in Indian monuments. The decisive step was taken in this direction in May 1844, when, following a suggestion from the Royal Asiatic Society of the United Kingdom,<sup>5</sup> the Court of Directors recommended to the Government of India the 'employment of some of our own talented officers' or 'any of the good means for getting copies of paintings not only in Ajanta but in other caves and to preserve the caves from dilapidation'. At the same time they requested to be supplied 'with a series of drawings of objects of interest . . . illustrative of the . . . phases, characters and conditions of its various . . . peoples comprising architecture, implements, costumes etc.' The Indian Government responded to the request by sanctioning a small sum for repairs to monuments, while the Bombay Government mapped out a thirty-two-year scheme for getting prepared the drawings of the principal objects in western India. The Court considered<sup>6</sup> this move to be unpractical and drew up a detailed plan for the early formation of an antiquaries' commission for 'collecting accurate, minute, and well-classified information as to the nature, the extent and the state of existing monuments'. The plan was somewhat modified by Lord Hardinge, who recommended that the proposed commission should not be appointed 'till one or more officers possessing habits of research and knowledge of Indian antiquities' had compiled preliminary reports upon each temple and building in detail and that the commission's duty should consist in selecting from these reports specimens of building worthy of delineation.<sup>7</sup> The Court approved of the revised plan,<sup>8</sup> and Markham Kittoe was appointed to conduct operations in Bihar and Banaras. The only other results of this decision were the appointment of Major F. Maisey to draw the

<sup>1</sup> Elliott endeavoured to complete what Mackenzie had begun and obtained copies of no less than five hundred and ninety-five inscriptions collected from Dhārwar, Sonda and north Mysore. He also illustrated the history of the Chālukyas and other southern dynasties with the help of their coins. *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, IV (1836) p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor's principal work includes the discovery of megalithic monuments in Shorāpur. *Jour. Bombay Branch Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, III (1847-53), p. 179; IV (1852-53), p. 380; *Trans. Roy. Irish Academy*, XXIV (1865).

<sup>3</sup> Rev. J. Stevenson mainly devoted his attention to the cave-inscriptions of west India. *Jour. Bombay Branch Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, V (1853-57).

<sup>4</sup> *Handbook of Architecture* (London, 1855). This was preceded by *Illustrations of Rock-cut Temples of India* (London, 1845) and *Picturesque Illustrations of Ancient Architecture in Hindostan* (London, 1847).

<sup>5</sup> Pub. Desp. from Court, no. 15, 29 May 1844.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1, 27 Jan. 1847.

<sup>7</sup> India Pub. Desp. to Court, no. 4, 19 Apr. 1847.

<sup>8</sup> Pub. Desp. from Court, no. 24, 29 Sep. 1847.



antiquities at Kālinjar and the sculptures at Sānchī,<sup>1</sup> and of Captain Gill to copy the paintings in Ajantā<sup>2</sup> and the Ghāt caves and the setting up of the Bombay cave-temple commission, on whose recommendation Lt. Brett was commissioned in 1851 to take impressions of the cave-inscriptions.<sup>3</sup>

During the turmoil brought about by the Mutiny and the political changes which closely followed its termination, these schemes were lost sight of within a few years of their adoption, and it was not till 1861 that the State could be aroused to a sense of its responsibilities in respect of the archaeology of the country. In November that year Alexander Cunningham, who had as far ago as 1848<sup>4</sup> formulated, without success, a plan for an Indian Archaeological Survey, placed before Lord Canning a memorandum urging on him the supreme need for undertaking a programme of systematic and complete investigation.<sup>5</sup> Cunningham's arguments had a telling effect, and Canning felt convinced that 'it will not be to our credit... if we continue to allow such fields of investigation as the remains of the old Buddhist capital in Bihar... the plains round Delhi studded with ruins more thickly than even the campagna of Rome, and many others to remain without more examination than they have hitherto received'. The Governor-General, in conclusion, sanctioned a scheme of survey in northern India, the aims of which were defined to be 'an accurate description—illustrated by plans, measurements, drawings, or photographs and by copies of inscriptions—of such remains as deserve notice, with the history of them so far as it may be traceable, and a record of the traditions that are retained regarding them'.<sup>6</sup> Preservation of monuments was left outside the scope of the programme, as the Government had no desire to commit themselves to any future or unforeseen expense. But by passing an act (XX) in 1863<sup>7</sup> they took the momentous step to invest themselves with the authority 'to prevent injury to and preserve buildings remarkable for their antiquity or for their historical or architectural value'. This departure from the old policy of apathy and downright neglect may be appropriately regarded as marking the birth of a new conscience in the country.

#### 4 THE FIRST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA: ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM

The conduct of the operation was naturally entrusted to Cunningham, who had 'more than any other officer on this side of India made the antiquities of the country his study'.<sup>8</sup> The new Archaeological Surveyor brought to his task the ideas and the techniques he had inherited from Prinsep and a mind which was at that time essentially

<sup>1</sup> G. Andrews' note to Henry Yule and the latter's Minute, 10 Feb. 1862 (P.W.D. Gen., 14 Feb. 1862, 28-33A). Kittoe was appointed Archaeological Enquirer in N.-W. Provinces. On his work see his letter to Cunningham, dated 19 May 1852, summarized by the latter in *Arch. Surv. Ind.*, I, pp. 124 ff. and E. Thomas, 'Notes on the excavations at Sarnath', *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, 1854, pp. 469 ff. On Maisiey see *Report to the Govt. of N.-W.P.* 1847; *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, XVII, pt. i (1848), pp. 171 and 333.

<sup>2</sup> Yule's Minutes, *op. cit.*; J. Geohagan's note, 9 Mar. 1870 (Pub. 30, Jul. 1870, 204-16).

<sup>3</sup> Bombay Government Resolution, 31 Jul. 1848.

<sup>4</sup> 'Proposed archaeological investigation', *Jour. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, XVII, pt. i (1848), p. 535.

<sup>5</sup> P.W.D. Gen., 14 Feb. 1862, 28-33A; *Arch. Surv. Ind. Rep.*, I, pp. iii-viii.

<sup>6</sup> Minute, 22 Jan. 1862 (P.W.D. Gen., 14 Feb. 1862, 28-33A); *Arch. Surv. Ind. Rep.*, I, pp. 1-iii.

<sup>7</sup> Sec. XXIII-XXIV.

<sup>8</sup> Cunningham was given a salary of Rs. 450 with a field-allowance of Rs. 250 and a share in the antiquities to be discovered by him.



pre-occupied with topographical problems, particularly those brought to the forefront by the recently published records of Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang. No wonder, therefore, that we find him dominated for the most part by the single idea of locating the holy places the Chinese pilgrims had traversed. 'In describing the ancient geography of India', he announced, 'the Elder Pliny, for the sake of clearness, follows the footsteps of Alexander the Great. For a similar reason I would follow the footsteps of the Chinese pilgrim Hwen-Thsang.' Within the short space from November 1861 to January 1865,<sup>1</sup> embracing the first phase of his operations, Cunningham succeeded in covering a vast area stretching from Gayā in the east to the Indus in the north-west, and from Kalsi in the north to the Narmadā in the south, having carefully surveyed and reported on every monument of note in all the historical sites visited by him.<sup>2</sup> The results of these operations received the highest approbation from the outside world and particularly from Sir Charles Wood, India's first Secretary of State, who observed that the preservation of the historical monuments and their accurate description were objects well-deserving the attention of the Government.<sup>3</sup> Lord Lawrence's Government, however, decided otherwise, and these useful labours came to an abrupt termination with the abolition of the Archaeological Survey in February 1866.<sup>4</sup>

## 5. WITHDRAWAL OF CUNNINGHAM

The vacuum created by Cunningham's withdrawal was but inadequately filled in by spasmodic official efforts in which genuine archaeological aims played very little part. Prompted by a letter privately addressed by Sir Stafford Northcote, the new Secretary of State, on the need for preserving architectural remains in India,<sup>5</sup> Lord Lawrence's government issued, on the 29th August 1867, a circular letter to all Local Governments desiring lists to be made of all historic buildings and photographs to be obtained of such of them as any amateur might chance to photograph.<sup>6</sup> Sir Stafford, however, found the scheme inadequate and directed that plans as well as photographs should be prepared on a systematic basis and that these should be accompanied with a written description of the subject. Following a suggestion from the Council of Education, Science and Art Department, England, it was further proposed by him that casts should be made of various buildings calculated to exemplify the different styles of Indian archi-

<sup>1</sup>The date usually given for the constitution of the first Archaeological Survey of India is 1860: C. Markham, *Memoir of the Indian Surveys*, 2nd ed. (London, 1878), p. 263; G. Bühler in *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, 1895, pp. 649 ff.; Curzon's speech, dated 6 Feb. 1900; N.P. Chakravarti in *Archaeology in India* (Delhi, 1950), p. 2. There is, however, no documentary evidence to support this date.

<sup>2</sup>An archaeological map of India prepared by Cunningham, his letter dated the 12th December 1863 to Colonel R. Strachey, announcing the identification of the ancient site of Ahichchhatra, and his daily journal containing information about the same discovery are reproduced on pls. IV-VI. Originals in P.W.D. Gen., 14 Feb. 1862, 28-33A, and Jan. 1863, 60-64.

<sup>3</sup>P.W.D. Desp. from London no. 28, 24 Jun. 1864; no. 29, 16 Jun. 1866.

<sup>4</sup>The document relating to this decision is not traceable, but Cunningham's letter to Government, dated 15th Jan. 1865, shows that he already knew of it. He left for England on the 9th February 1866, P.W.D. Civil Works Misc., Mar. 1866, 6 and 9.

<sup>5</sup>Lawrence's Minute, 28 Aug. 1867, Pub., 6 Sep. 1867, 41.

<sup>6</sup>Circular no. 57-4030-40A, *ibid.* The instructions covered the Indian States including Hyderabad and Mysore and were circulated to all Political Officers. Also Pub. Desp. to London, no. 163, 6 Sep. 1867.



ture, the expenses being shared between the Council and the Indian Government.<sup>1</sup> The main features of the programme which was drawn up in consequence were that the task should be committed to the various Local Governments with a moderate allotment of money not exceeding Rs. 52,000 a year and that the principals of the art colleges in India should train Indian workers to make moulds from which any requisite number of casts could be furnished. Four independent parties were proposed to conduct operations in Bombay, Madras, Bengal and the North-Western Provinces.<sup>2</sup> The results following from these operations were, however, hardly commensurate with either the money, the labour or the time applied to them.<sup>3</sup> In Bombay, thanks chiefly to the efforts of Sykes and Burgess, some good photographs and plans were produced, and a number of casts were prepared under the able supervision of Terry. The party in the upper Provinces, led by Lt. H. H. Cole, who had been appointed the local Archaeological Surveyor,<sup>4</sup> took a number of views of Kashmir, Mathurā and other places, all of which were subsequently published in his *Archaeological Survey of India* (London, 1869-70). About the same time Cole also prepared a gigantic cast of the Sānchī gateway in one hundred and twelve pieces for the use of the South Kensington Museum. But the lists of monuments compiled under the scheme were generally found to be unsatisfactory. The most significant achievement of the project was the magnificent survey-operation which Rajendralal Mitra carried out in Orissa between 1868 and 1869 and which was later described in two monumental volumes, entitled *Antiquities of Orissa*.<sup>5</sup>

The belief which dominated the archaeological thought of the period was that only the objects which were attractive as artistic or architectural pieces needed caring for, and that the archaeologists' function was simply to make casts or to take photographs. The only man in India to see the fallacy underlying this view was E. C. Bayley, Secretary to the Home Department, who declared it to be the supreme duty of the Government not only to conserve all historical remains that had been located but to encourage the exploration of others yet to be discovered. The extent to which the latter might be brought to light was, in his view, almost incredible, and he was convinced that many a Pompeii was lying buried in India untouched by the archaeologists' spade.<sup>6</sup> Bayley's voice remained unheeded for the moment, and things did not change for the better till the Duke of Argyll, the new Secretary of State, directed his attention to the problem. Argyll realized at once the need for divesting the Government of the duties they had undertaken of financing desultory attempts at photographing and preparing casts and felt persuaded that the time had arrived for directing researches in a more systematic and deliberate manner than had been attempted before. In his despatch of the 11th January 1870 he advised the Government of India to make a new start by establishing a central department which would tackle the archaeological problem of the whole country. He strongly decried the

<sup>1</sup> Norman McLeod to Secy. of State, 30 Jul. 1867; Pub. Desp. from London, no. 165, 9 Dec. 1868.

<sup>2</sup> Pub. Dept. Resolution, 14-930-41, 24 Feb. 1868; Pub. Desp. to London, no. 34, 28 Feb. 1868; no. 92, 14 May 1868.

<sup>3</sup> J. Geohagan's note, *op. cit.*, which gives a review of the operations undertaken. Also E. C. Bayley's note, 22 Feb. 1869, Pub., 6 Mar. 1869, 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Cole used to designate himself, no doubt unjustifiably, 'Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India', Pub., 30 Jul. 1870, 204. On his employment on the modelling of the Sānchī gateway, see Bayley's letter to N.-W.P. Government, 2 Mar. 1869, Pub., 6 Mar. 1869, 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Calcutta, 1875-80. For Mitra's plan of archaeological survey see his letter, 11 Apr. 1868 to Capt. Stansfield, Private Secretary to Lt. Governor of Bengal, Pub., Aug. 1868, 83-85.

<sup>6</sup> E. C. Bayley's note to Gordon, Aug. 1867, Pub., 6 Sep. 1867, 41.



prevailing tendency to rifle archaeological sites of their antiquities, as he had the insight, rare all over the world in those days, to be able to perceive that the antiquities were instructive only when preserved in their original context. He, moreover, laid special stress on the need for conservation, pointing out that it was the bounden duty of the Government 'to prevent its own servants from wantonly accelerating the decay' of monuments.<sup>1</sup>

## 6. CUNNINGHAM RETURNS

The effect of the despatch was the immediate revival of the Archaeological Survey of India as a distinct department of the Government and the appointment of General Cunningham as its Director General.<sup>2</sup> In an official resolution the task of the new department was declared to embody 'a complete search over the whole country, and a systematic record and description of all architectural and other remains that are either remarkable for their antiquity, or their beauty or their historical interest'. Cunningham was further advised to direct his attention to the preparation of a brief summary of the labours of former enquirers and of the results which had already been obtained and to the formulation of a general scheme of a systematic enquiry for the guidance of a staff of assistants in present and future researches. He was, to start with, given a staff of two assistants, J. D. Beglar and A. C. Carlisle, who were later joined by H. B. W. Garrick. But the Government expressed a desire that as far as possible intelligent 'natives' should be employed in, and trained to, the task of photographing, measuring and surveying buildings, directing excavations and the like and deciphering inscriptions. It was believed that an annual sum of £5,000 would be sufficient for long time to come not only to maintain the central agency but to aid local researches and provide for the annual publication of the results attained.<sup>3</sup>

Cunningham came back to resume his interrupted task in February 1871, almost about the same time when Schliemann was preparing for his epoch-making excavations in Hissarlik. The world of archaeological thought was at that time in a state of ferment. But Cunningham appears to have scarcely known anything of it, and he preferred to adhere to his old aims and old methods. Immediately on his arrival he applied himself with his two assistants to a survey of the two great capitals of the Mughul empire, Delhi and Agra. The year 1872 was spent on tours in Rājputānā, Bundelkhand, Mathurā, Bodh-Gayā and Gaur, while in 1873 a survey was carried out of selected sites in Panjab,

<sup>1</sup> Pub. Desp., no. 4, 11 Jan. 1870. In arriving at his decision Argyll was considerably influenced by Cunningham's memorandum of March 1869 on the archaeological remains in India, Pub., 30 Jul. 1870, 204-16.

<sup>2</sup> Himself an antiquarian of great repute, Bayley had a large part in shaping the new archaeological policy of the Government. Cunningham, in reality, was his choice (note dated March (?) 1870). See also Mayo's minute, 30 May 1870, in which he recorded: 'I think the time is come when a great and enlightened Government can no longer neglect contributing to the archaeological literature of the world the result of systematic investigations into monuments and remains, which perhaps are unequalled in their historical and archaeological value', Pub., 30 Jul. 1870, 204-16; Pub. Desp. to London no. 84, 29 Jul. 1870. Cunningham was appointed on a salary of Rs. 2,000 per month; Pub. Desp. from London no. 111, 24 Nov. 1870. The total expenses of the Department came to about Rs. 54,000 (pay of two Assistants, 9,600; establishment including one draftsman, two measurers, two servants, six temporary hands, contingent charges and travelling allowances, 8,000; Imperial grant to Provincial Budgets in north India, 12,500). Home, Arch., Jul. 1885, 5-9.

<sup>3</sup> Pub. Resolution no. 649-50, 2 Feb. 1871, Pub., 18 Feb. 1871, 28-29; *Gazette of India*, 11 Feb. 1871, p. 64.



in the course of which an extensive collection of Indo-Greek sculptures was obtained. Between 1873 and 1877 Cunningham traversed nearly the whole of the Central Provinces, Bundelkhand and Mālwa, his first attention being directed to the magnificent *stūpa* of Bharhut. He also succeeded in discovering several monolithic capitals and other remains of Aśoka and his successors and numerous specimens of the architecture of the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods. The season of 1878-79 was devoted to further surveys in Panjab, the object of which was to complete as far as possible a general exploration of the province. The expedition was rewarded by the discovery of a huge hoard of pre-Alexandrian Indian coins at the site of Taxila. The next season found Cunningham engaged in a tour in Bengal and Bihar, in the course of which he was able to pick up a dated inscription fixing the accession of Dharmapāla of the Pāla dynasty. The year 1880-81 was spent in clearing the Bodh-Gayā temple and in identifying the sites of many holy places described by the Chinese pilgrims, while the following season was devoted to a further tour in the Central Provinces. The expeditions undertaken between 1882 and 1885, which brought to a close Cunningham's exploration-programme, enabled him to examine and report carefully on many historic sites in eastern Rājputānā, Bundelkhand and Rewā. The results of all these labours may be aptly summed up in his own words thus:

'I have identified the sites of many of the chief cities and most famous places of ancient India, such as the rock of Aornos, the city of Taxila, and the fortress of Sangala, all connected with the history of Alexander the Great. In India I have found the sites of the celebrated cities of Sankisa, Śrāvastī and Kausāmbī, all intimately connected with the history of Buddha. Amongst other discoveries I may mention the Great Stūpa of Bharhut, on which most of the principal events of Buddha's life were sculptured and inscribed. I have found three dated inscriptions of King Aśoka, and my assistants have brought to light a new pillar of Aśoka, and a new text of his rock edicts in Bactrian characters, in which the whole of the 12th edict . . . is complete. I have traced the Gupta style of architecture in the temples of the Gupta kings at Tigowa, Bilsar, Bhitargaon, Kuthera, and Deogarh, and I have discovered new inscriptions of this powerful dynasty at Eran, Udayagiri and other places.'

Although survey and exploration formed the first item in Cunningham's programme, he found time to direct his attention to the problem of epigraphy as well. A number of inscriptions had already been published by scholars, but these efforts were absolutely unplanned and too few and far between, and the out-turn was altogether insignificant in comparison with the extensive materials that were available. But epigraphy received a new impetus with the founding in 1872 by James Burgess of the *Indian Antiquary*, which made possible the publication by scholars like Bühler and Fleet, Eggeling and Rice, Bhandarkar and Indraji, of many valuable inscriptions not only with texts and translations, but, in many cases, with lithographic facsimiles. Cunningham's own survey-tours provided him with opportunities to pick up and examine a large number of new inscriptions which he took care to notice or publish in his survey-reports. But he felt the urge for doing the work in a more systematic and standardized manner and was persuaded that each series of inscriptions should be published in a connected form, according to the dynasties or succession of dynasties instead of being scattered, as then, over a series of different volumes and mixed up with others that had no bearing on them. The prevailing practice not only prevented the adoption of a uniform method of editing but inevitably led to duplication, the same ground being gone over again and again by different scholars working on the same inscriptions unknown to each other. Cunningham, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Cunningham to Government, 15 Feb. 1885.



planned to bring out a series of 'corpora' of inscriptions, the object of which was to present connected epigraphical materials in a compact and handy volume. The outcome of the plan was the appearance in 1877 of the magnificent first volume of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* embodying carefully edited texts of all the available inscriptions of Aśoka and his grandson with translations and lithographic facsimiles. But the task was already proving too great for him to cope with, and he found it necessary to entrust it to the authoritative and responsible control of a qualified full-time epigraphist. On the 3rd October 1881 he placed before the Government a proposal for setting up an independent epigraphical survey under the direction of J. F. Fleet, who had already become the *facile princeps* in the deciphering of old inscriptions.<sup>1</sup> With his usual liberality he offered to give up Rs. 500 a month of his own salary towards the pay of the new officer. Supported by James Burgess and the Berlin International Congress of Orientalists, the proposal eventually received the sanction of the Secretary of State, and Fleet was appointed on the 17th January 1883 as Government Epigraphist, experimentally on a term of three years.<sup>2</sup> The first duty that devolved on him was to edit the inscriptions of the Early Guptas and others connected with them, which were ultimately published in 1888 as the third volume in the series started by Cunningham. Fleet had to collect his materials all anew, in the course of which he was able to discover some entirely new inscriptions which set at rest the long-disputed question of the epoch of the Gupta era. The new volume included the finest set of lithographs that had ever yet been published and made a new starting point in the study of Indian epigraphy. The norm set by him in the editing of inscriptions is followed by Indian epigraphists even now.

Conservation was from the very first kept outside the Director General's purview. But on the 13th February 1873 the Central Government issued a circular assigning to Local Governments the duty of caring for the preservation of all buildings and monuments of historical and architectural interest.<sup>3</sup> A different emphasis, however, came to be placed on Imperial responsibility in this respect when Lord Lytton took up the reins of the Viceregal office. One of his first endeavours was to prevent the despoiling of the archaeological remains by treasure-hunters, and the outcome was the Treasure Trove Act of 1878, which authorized the Government to claim possession of any treasure unearthed that exceeded ten rupees in value. In January 1878 Lytton recorded in a Minute that 'the preservation of the national antiquities and works of art ought not to be exclusively left to the charge of Local Governments, which may not always be alive to the importance of such a duty. Lieutenant Governors who combined aesthetic culture with administrative energy are not likely to be very common, and I cannot conceive of any claims upon the administrative and financial resources of the Supreme Government more essentially imperial than this'. Lytton followed this up with a resolution drafted in the same year recommending the appointment of a Curator of Ancient Monuments, who was to carry out under the Central Government a general system of conservation. He was to prepare classified lists of the monuments of each province, grouping them according as they required to be kept in permanent good repair or were decayed beyond that point but still not in complete ruin

<sup>1</sup> Pub., Sep. 1881, 25-28.

<sup>2</sup> Burgess' memorandum on the collection and publication of Indian historical inscriptions, 20 Aug. 1881; President of the Fifth International Congress of Orientalists to Secretary of State, 22 Oct. 1881; Financial Desp. to Secretary of State, no. 157, 9 Jun. 1882, Home, Arch., Nov. 1882, 18-27; Desp. from London, no. 146, 21 Sep. 1882, Home, Arch., Nov. 1882, 5-6; Resolution 17, 6 Feb. 1883, Home, Arch., Feb. 1883, 2-7. Fleet was given a salary of Rs. 1,400 and an establishment allowance of Rs. 960.

<sup>3</sup> Circular no. 9, P.W.D., 13 Feb. 1873.



or were unimportant or irretrievably ruined. The Central Government were then to arrange with each Local Government for the grant to be made to the latter for the preservation of the monuments in aid of local resources. All provincial projects for repair and restoration were to be submitted to the Centre through the Curator, points of architectural taste being referred to a Committee of Taste, to be set up under the scheme.<sup>1</sup> The proposal, though negatived by the Secretary of State in 1878 on the ground that the scrutiny of provincial projects could be equally well-done by the Director General of Archaeology and that the proposed Curator was an unnecessary fifth wheel in the coach, was revived under Lord Ripon in a slightly modified form, and the appointment of a special officer as Curator of Ancient Monuments was sanctioned on the 11th November 1880 for a term of three years.<sup>2</sup>

Major H. H. Cole was the officer selected for the new post, and he joined his duties in January 1881. His task was 'to give the Government of India and the Local Governments the advantage of professional advice concerning the restoration and conservation of ancient monuments throughout India', the Local Governments being left to provide a permanent system of inspection and conservation. Earlier, in April 1880, Cole had been appointed on the special duty of examining the condition of the monuments of Lahore, Delhi and Agra and had compiled an excellent report of the work done. He had great knowledge of his subject, great industry and great enthusiasm, and during the three years allotted to him he was able to examine nearly all the most important buildings in British India and the Indian States and to draw up valuable lists and memoranda of work to be done, which were later appended to his three gigantic reports (published in 1882, 1883 and 1885). Cole also produced in twenty-two parts a series of Preliminary Reports on particular groups of monuments in Bombay, Madras, Rājputānā, Hyderabad, Panjab and the North-Western Provinces. He personally supervised the repairs of quite a large number of these buildings, and under his aegis many useful restorations were effected in the gateway at Sānchī, in the fort at Agra, in Akbar's tomb at Sikandara, at Fatehpur Sikrī, Mathurā and Brindāvan. He suffered, however, from a tendency to go beyond his special field of work and take part in activities which had no bearing on conservation. He actually embarked on archaeological survey and excavation-operations and projected a costly scheme of publication, which in the end had to be stopped under Government orders. The materials, which contained exceptionally fine illustrations of the most famous buildings surveyed by him, were subsequently distributed in ten folio volumes without title-page. When his term lapsed in 1883, the appointment was abolished, and the Government decided to revert to the old system of leaving the task of conservation to Local Governments.<sup>3</sup>

The new decision was communicated to the Local Governments in a Resolution dated the 26th November 1883.<sup>4</sup> The latter were required to take up on the basis of Cole's Report for 1882-83 the preparation of a classified list showing separately: (1) the monuments which from their 'present condition' and historical or archaeological value ought to be kept in permanent good repairs; (2) those which it was only possible or desirable to save from further decay by such minor measures as the eradication of vegetation, the exclusion of water from the walls or the like; and (3) those which for their advanced stage of decay or comparative unimportance it was impossible or unnecessary to preserve. Due

<sup>1</sup> Financial (Expenditure), Dec. 1878, 570-74.

<sup>2</sup> P. W. Desp., no. 43, 11 Nov. 1880; Financial Accts., March 1881, 507-10.

<sup>3</sup> Financial B (Salaries), Apr. 1884, 763-67; May 1884, 953.

<sup>4</sup> Home, Arch., Resolution no. 3-168-83, Home, Arch., Dec. 1883, 3-6; Finance and Commerce Desp. no. 2, 18 Dec. 1883.



provision was to be made for the proper custody and keeping up of the monuments in classes I and II, the cost being charged to the public works allotment of each province. Only in very special cases would the Government of India promise further assistance from the Imperial funds. But when all the lists eventually came to be submitted, they were found to be drawn up on such very dissimilar plans that a satisfactory amalgamation was unpracticable, and the Government had to send them back for being revised according to the form prescribed by them.<sup>1</sup>

The exclusion of conservation from the scope of the Archaeological Survey brought forth comments from Cunningham, who believed that 'the trained and experienced archaeologist who has examined and measured and described the buildings of different ages was naturally the best authority as to the style of all the repairs that may be required for any ancient monuments'. He pointed out that the divided authority was a mistake and that the only judicious arrangement was the combination of conservation with exploration.<sup>2</sup>

But Cunningham had in the meantime decided to retire. He had put up almost eighteen years' continuous labour and felt satisfied that the greater part of north India had been fully explored and that the time had arrived when the Survey-organization itself could be dissolved without any loss to archaeology. He believed that the future work of exploration could be successfully carried out by a much smaller and less expensive establishment. He accordingly recommended the abolition of the Director General's post and the re-organization of north India into three independent circles—Panjab with Sind and Rājputānā, the North-Western Provinces (present Uttar Pradesh) with the Central India Agency and the Central Provinces; and Bengal including Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Chota Nagpur, each being managed by a separate Surveyor with a small staff of two assistants and two draftsmen. Madras with Bombay and Hyderabad was to be left to the charge of Burgess, the then archaeological Surveyor of the area, while epigraphy was to remain, as at that time, to be dealt with by Fleet. The Surveyors were to be on the footing of professional advisers to the Local Governments and the Political Agencies, to which they were required to send their reports and programmes of work and which they were also to advise as to the various monuments and buildings which required to be restored or preserved.<sup>3</sup> These recommendations were accepted by the Government with the only modification that the new Surveyors should submit their reports on the strictly survey-part of their work through Burgess.<sup>4</sup> Under the new arrangement Bengal was entrusted to Cunningham's assistant Beglar, and the North-Western Provinces to Major J. B. Keith, who had as his assistant Dr. A. Führer, then Curator, Lucknow Museum, while the Panjab Circle was placed under C. J. Rodgers.

Cunningham's retirement on the 1st October 1885 robbed the Indian archaeological scene of its most familiar figure, a colossus which had been striding it for over a quarter of a century. His contribution to the development of Indian archaeology has been vigorously disputed. To some he was the father of Indian archaeology, who had by his ceaseless labours given form and precision to aims and methods which had before him

<sup>1</sup>An exception was provided by Burgess' *List of Antiquarian Remains in Bombay Presidency* (Bombay, 1885), which included those of Berar and Sind as well.

<sup>2</sup>Cunningham's memorandum on the Archaeological Department and the conservation of monuments, Home, Arch., Jul. 1885, 5-9.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* and Cunningham's memorandum, dated 21 Apr. 1885, in the same collection.

<sup>4</sup>Finance and Commerce (Salaries) Despatch no. 48, 17 Feb. 1885; Home, Arch., Resolution no. 2-8-142, 6 Jun. 1885. The Surveyors were given a scale of Rs. 600-25-700, Assistant Surveyors Rs. 300-25-400, Draftsmen Rs. 180-10-220 and writers Rs. 50 per month.



been only vague and indistinct. To others he was only a remarkable amateur whose reputation derived from the astonishing value and interest of his finds and who remained to the last ignorant of all the scientific methods, which, during the period of his sway, had forced their way into the understanding of the western and the Near Eastern archaeologists. Archaeology with him was but a search for past architectural styles, art-treasures, coins and inscriptions, and its connexion with the study of the common objects which constituted man's material culture ever eluded his grasp, although this connexion had been firmly established by the works of Thomsen, Worsaae and Nilsson in Denmark, of Giuseppe Fiorelli in Italy, of Curtius, Dorpfeld and Schliemann in Greece and Anatolia. The excavations undertaken by Cunningham seldom went beyond what might be called prospecting. A very considerable number of *stūpas* were no doubt opened, rifled of their deposits and searched for inscriptions; and surface-diggings and small clearings were effected in many of the ancient mounds and fields of ruins. But rarely did he undertake deep excavation, and such of it as was attempted, as at Gayā, Sānchi, Taxila and Bhilsā, did more harm than good by its consistent neglect of stratigraphical principles leading inevitably to the destruction of much archaeological evidence. To the claims of prehistory he remained indifferent to the end, and in the megalithic monuments, which the conjoined labours of Babington and Harkness, Congreve and Kearnes, Newbold and Meadows Taylor had brought to light, he was disposed to see only an earlier form of the *stūpa*.<sup>1</sup> Even more surprising is the apathy he evinced towards palaeoliths, the occurrence of which in India had been established beyond doubt by Bruce Foote and his colleagues of the Geological Survey during the early sixties of the century.<sup>2</sup> Cunningham was within an ace of an epoch-making discovery in 1873, when he unearthed at Harappā a pictographic seal along with many specimens of Harappan pottery.<sup>3</sup> But he scarcely understood that they were the fragments of a great past civilization. He touched it, but passed it by. Yet, it would be sheer perversity to scan Cunningham for faults which he shared with all his colleagues in India and many in the west. No one with any archaeological experience can refuse to acknowledge the value of his great pioneering work. He was one of the first to stress the importance of fieldwork, accurate description and precise measurements, and he shared with Prinsep the honour of liberating archaeology of its literary affiliations. His ideal of survey-work was comprehensive enough to include every site that was of promise, every antiquity that was of interest, and he was responsible for evolving a uniform system of recording under which the description of each building was to be accompanied by an account of its history and purpose, of its mode of construction, of the nature and colour of its material and even of the mason's marks on the stones.<sup>4</sup> Above all, he was prompt in publishing his results, as is amply testified by the twentythree volumes of his survey-reports, which, in Lord Curzon's picturesque words, 'constitute . . . a noble mine of information in which the student has but to delve in order to discover an abundant spoil'.

## 7. JAMES BURGESS

Cunningham's place in west and south Indian archaeology was filled by James Burgess, whose keen interest in the antiquities of these regions and early training as an

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Surv. Ind. Rep.*, I, pp. xxx-xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Bruce Foote, 'On the occurrence of stone implements in the various parts of Madras and North Arcot Districts', *Madras Jour. Literature and Science*, III series, pt. 2 (1866).

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Surv. Ind. Rep.*, V (Calcutta, 1875), p. 105 and pl. XXXIII.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum on the archaeological remains in India, Pub., 30 Jul. 1871, 204-216.



architect had eminently fitted him for this significant rôle. When, in 1873,<sup>1</sup> a regular archaeological survey was for the first time constituted for west India, the charge of its operation was appropriately entrusted to Burgess, who had by that date compiled not only an extensive inventory of principal monuments in Bombay, Sind, Berar, the Central Provinces and Hyderabad, but had, in addition to a monograph on Elephanta, brought out three portfolios of photographs dealing with the Śatruñjaya temples, the monuments of Somnāth, Jūnāgaḍh, and Gīrnār and the ancient architecture of Gujarat and Ahmedabad. The new arrangement was sanctioned for three years, subsequently extended to five,<sup>2</sup> at an annual cost of Rs. 13,000.<sup>3</sup> There was no provision for a permanent staff, and Burgess was required to conduct his field-work for six months of cold season each year, at the end of which he was to dismiss his assistants and take the materials to England for publication.

Burgess started his operations on the 15th January 1874, covering in his first season everything of interest in Belgaum and Kaladgi Districts. The next season was devoted to Kāthiāwad and Cutch, and the season of 1875-76 to the western districts of the Nizam's Dominions, the results of all these operations being published in three magnificent volumes of reports with numerous photographic and other illustrations. Burgess' fourth volume embodied a report on the Buddhist cave-temples in the Deccan, representing the result of his operations during 1876-79. On the expiry of his five-year term in 1879 Burgess found that he had covered only a small fraction of his programme. He asked for a further extension of four years and also pressed for a permanent staff that would carry on fieldwork during his absence in England.<sup>4</sup> The extension was agreed to, but the Government met his other demand only halfway by providing for the appointment of an assistant on a year-to-year basis.<sup>5</sup>

In November 1881 the scope of Burgess' activities underwent a radical expansion by the amalgamation with his existing charge that of the newly constituted Archaeological Survey of South India. A proposal for organizing a regular survey in the south had been in the air since about 1874, when the Secretary of State addressed a letter on the subject to the Provincial Government.<sup>6</sup> Delays, however, had intervened, and nothing substantial

<sup>1</sup> Burgess had formulated a proposal for setting up a Survey in west India as early as 1870 (letter to the Hon'ble B. H. Ellis, 28 Apr., Pub., 30 Jul. 1871, 204-216), and this had been repeated in his memorandum submitted to the Bombay Government in Aug. 1870. But it was not until 1871, when the Secretary of State directed the Local Governments' attention to the subject that a serious notice was taken of the matter. A scheme for survey was sanctioned by the Central Government only in August 1873. Home, Arch., Jun. 1882, 1-4. Burgess was given a salary of Rs. 800 per month, raised to Rs. 1,000 on the 1st March 1875.

<sup>2</sup> Bombay Government to India Government, no. 2792, 15 Sep. 1875.

<sup>3</sup> Raised in Dec. 1874 to Rs. 18,000, it came to be stabilized at Rs. 17,500 with effect from 1875. Home Dept. letter to Bombay Government, no. 1964, 24 Nov. 1875.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess to Bombay Government, 22 Dec. 1879, 15 Jan. 1880 and 17 Feb. 1882, Home, Arch., Oct. 1885, 41-48.

<sup>5</sup> Bombay Government Resolution in Bombay Gen. Dept. Proceedings, no. 214, 22 Jan. 1880, and no. 815, 4 Mar. 1882.

<sup>6</sup> The Secretary of States' letter was inspired by a representation made to him by the Oriental Congress of 1874. There was a talk in 1876 of appointing H. H. Cole as Surveyor, but this fizzled out. Sewell was put on to Amarāvati survey in 1875. In 1879 the Central Government allotted to Madras a sum of Rs. 15,000 on condition that the work should be directed by Cunningham, but nothing came out of it, as the latter could not spare time for the work. In December 1880 the Secretary of State suggested that Madras should be added to the charge of Burgess. This took effect only in November 1881. It meant no immediate increase in Burgess' emoluments. His pay was, however, raised to Rs. 1,200 on the 6th October 1883.



had been done in the Province beyond the appointment of Robert Sewell of the Provincial Civil Service for conducting the exploration of the Amarāvati *stūpa* and for the compilation of a basic list of all antiquarian remains in the Presidency. Sewell's lists of antiquarian remains and report on the Amarāvati excavations carried out in 1877 thus formed the foundation on which Burgess was called upon to build. But Burgess was equal to the challenge, and in his first season he was able to complete the survey of the remains round Vijayawāda and the Amarāvati and Jaggayyapeta *stūpas*, combining with this task a thorough examination of the Chālukyan temples in Dhārwar District. In 1882 his burden was somewhat lightened by the appointment of Alexander Rea as his assistant, in collaboration with whom he was able to bring to completion not only the survey of Madurā District which he had taken up but also the examination already undertaken of the monuments in the Belgaum region. In 1883-84, while Rea surveyed in detail the remains at Mahābalipuram and the ruins at Hampi, Burgess directed his attention to the Muslim architecture at Champāner, Dholkā and Ahmedabad. The next year was devoted to the survey of Dabhoi, Cambay and Broach and to the study of the Pallava temples at Kānchī. Burgess had by then been able to make a better assessment of the magnitude and complexity of his task and had felt convinced that for west India alone, exclusive of Sind, there were six more years' work ahead and that to complete the work it was essential that the staff under him should be sanctioned on a permanent basis. For Madras he found it more difficult to make an estimate, but he suggested that the work should be continued for a further term of five years, that the staff should be given a regular scale of pay and that an epigraphist well-versed in Sanskrit, Pāli and the Dravidian languages should be employed on translating inscriptions in these languages, to enable the Survey to complete its work 'within a reasonable time'. The scheme was approved by the Government of India for a term of five years,<sup>1</sup> and Dr. E. Hultzsch, an eminent linguist, was selected for the post of Epigraphist in August 1886 on the basis of a three-year contract.<sup>2</sup>

While the Survey-machine in the south and the west was being put in order, Burgess was invited by the Government to fill Cunningham's place in north India by becoming the channel for the submission of the reports from the three new Survey-Circles (above p. 17). Burgess, however, had no desire to accept his predecessor's position without his powers and pointed out that the new system would not work unless it was placed under him in name as well as in fact.<sup>3</sup> With the solitary exception of Führer, then in temporary charge of the North-Western Provinces, none of the new Surveyors, in his view, had either the scholarship, experience or training essential for the direction of survey-work, and even Führer lacked architectural training which was a serious drawback. Each one of them therefore required detailed professional supervision almost at every stage. Burgess, moreover, found the system unnecessarily expensive and believed that substantial economy could be effected by retrenching some of the higher posts and employing instead a larger number of lower-paid assistants. He suggested the abolition of the Epigraphist's office, which was costing

<sup>1</sup> Burgess to Bombay Government, 11 Jun. 1885; to Madras Government, 8 Apr. 1885; Government of India to Burgess, 30 Oct. 1885, Home, Arch., Oct. 1885, 41-48; Burgess to Bombay and Madras Governments, 7 Nov. 1885; Government of India, Home, Arch., Resolution no. 4-9-94, 15 Mar. 1886; Financial (Salaries) Desp. to London, no. 140, 4 May 1886, Home, Arch., May 1886, 10-18. An allotment of Rs. 17,080 was made for the Bombay Survey and one of Rs. 16,960 for the Madras Survey. The pay of Burgess' assistants in Bombay and Madras was fixed at Rs. 420-40-580 and Rs. 350-25-500 respectively, Desp. from London, no. 140, 4 May 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Home, Arch., August 1886, 45-47. Hultzsch was given a salary of Rs. 400. He joined in November 1886.

<sup>3</sup> Burgess to Government of India, 27 Jan. and 6 Feb. 1886.



Government Rs. 20,000 annually without yielding, in his view, an adequate return, and he assured the Government that with a much smaller grant of Rs. 7,000 he would be able to get accomplished what Fleet was doing with the help of the most competent scholars in India and Europe.<sup>1</sup> As a further step both to efficiency and economy, Burgess recommended the complete amalgamation of conservation with survey-work and pleaded for closer co-operation between the museums and survey-officers in the matter of conserving, describing and studying the antiquities unearthed by the latter. All these recommendations bore fruit in an official decision to unify under a single executive head not only the three separate Surveys in the north, west and south but of the three distinct fields of operation popularly associated with archaeology: exploration, conservation and epigraphy.<sup>2</sup> But the unification remained no more than a distant ideal, and the machinery devised to implement it left little initiative or power in the hands of the Director General. No report or programme could reach him from any of his colleagues before it had been scrutinized by the appropriate Local Administration, whose suggestions he had no authority either to alter or set aside without reference to the Centre. Programmes of conservation were to be drawn up by the regional Surveyors and to be submitted to the local authorities for their decision. The Director General was to act only as a post-office; he could offer his comments but take no decision. At Burgess' suggestion, however, the Assistant Surveyor's post in the Panjab Circle was retrenched, and E. W. Smith was appointed as Architectural Assistant in the North-Western Provinces to fill the gaps in Führer's qualifications. With the termination of Fleet's appointment on the 1st June 1886, epigraphy also came under the control of the Survey, and an annual grant of Rs. 6,000 was placed at its disposal to enable the deciphering, the translation and the publication of ancient inscriptions.

Burgess' first task as Director General, whose duties he assumed on the 25th March 1886, was to obtain the details which, in his view, the northern Surveys had neglected in respect of architectural measurements and drawings. His aims and methods hardly differed from Cunningham's, except in the added emphasis he preferred to place on architectural survey. 'Archaeology being' in his view 'but the history of art', he considered it to be his aim 'to provide a pretty full illustration and history of ancient and medieval architecture down to the decline of the Muhammedan styles'.<sup>3</sup> To this one end he subordinated most of his programmes, as would be amply evidenced by the nature and the quality of the careful architectural surveys carried out either by him or by his colleagues during the eventful years covering his stewardship. Among the most outstanding of these activities was the elaborate survey made by Führer and Smith between 1886 and 1887 of the Sharqi architecture of Jaunpur and of the monuments of Zafarābād, Saheth Maheth and Ayodhyā. Equally noteworthy were the operations conducted by Smith during 1888-89 in Budaon, Lalitpur, Orchhā and other places in Bundelkhand, the survey of ancient architecture in north Gujarat and the Muslim architecture in Bijāpur carried out by Henry Cousens, and that of the monuments at Mahābalipuram and of the antiquities in Krishnā, Nellore and Godāvāri Districts completed by Rea during the same period. Burgess found hardly any time to take much active interest in excavation, and the only

<sup>1</sup>The proposal was strongly contested by Fleet, who wanted to separate epigraphy from the Archaeological Survey. Fleet to Government of India, 15 Feb. 1886.

<sup>2</sup>Home, Arch., Resolution no. 5-95-113, 15 Mar. 1886; Government of India to Burgess, 12 Apr. 1886; Financial (Salaries) Desp. to London no. 236, 7 Aug. 1886, Home, Arch., Aug. 1886, 22-37. Burgess' salary was fixed at Rs. 1,500, the total sanctioned cost of the Survey being Rs. 80,540.

<sup>3</sup>Note on the Archaeological Survey of India, 9 Feb. 1889, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jun. 1890, 1-30; Burgess to Government of India, 27 Jan. 1886, Home, Arch., Aug. 1886, 22-37.



major operation undertaken by him was the digging up of the Kankālī Tīlā mound at Mathurā between 1887 and 1888. Yet, this in itself was a great achievement, as the effect of the excavation, which brought to light a plethora of sculptures bearing dated inscriptions, was not only to open up a new world for the Indian archaeologist but to make him for the first time alive to the value of deep and extensive digging. But Burgess did more than this. Although he was ignorant of the scientific techniques available in his time, he was clear-sighted enough to insist on a professional control of excavation and to press for official measures that would legalize any digging, except those which the Archaeological Survey itself conducted.<sup>1</sup> He was also the first man to devote himself strenuously to the task of ridding India of robbers and art-collection touts masquerading as antiquarians. In 1886 he succeeded in inducing the Government to issue two directives, one debarring public officers from disposing of, without official approval, antiquities found or acquired by them;<sup>2</sup> the other forbidding the digging up of ancient remains of any kind without the previous consent of the Archaeological Survey.<sup>3</sup> Burgess wanted to follow this up by an amendment of the Treasure Trove Act which would make it unlawful to export antiquities without an official permit;<sup>4</sup> but nothing tangible came out of this laudable endeavour. To the field of epigraphy Burgess rendered a signal service by starting in October 1888 a quarterly publication *Epigraphia Indica*, of which he was able to bring out, in two years' time, as many as eight fascicules containing highly valuable inscriptions edited by great epigraphists like Bühler, Kielhorn and Eggeling. Earlier he had compiled a volume of Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions, and his colleague, E. Hultzsch, collected and edited a mass of south Indian epigraphic records sufficient to fill three large volumes. A good feature of Burgess' archaeological administration was that he laid special emphasis on the enlisting of native talents in the discovery and translation of inscriptions and training them up in the technique of epigraphical researches.

In bringing out the results of his investigations Burgess followed a system somewhat different from Cunningham's. Instead of publishing periodical reports of his discoveries at the time they were made, he preferred to keep his materials with him till enough had been collected and studied to enable the production of a complete monograph that would present an exhaustive and authoritative treatment of the subject under enquiry. By this means he was able, within fifteen years, starting from his first assumption of duties in western India, to produce no less than twenty magnificent volumes, of which seven formed part of the *Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series*. But he was attempting what was perhaps beyond the capacity of any single man, and in February 1889, about eighteen months before his due date of retirement, he found himself encumbered with a huge mass of material sufficient to fill twelve large volumes in the *New Imperial Series* and one of the *Epigraphia Indica*.<sup>5</sup> Criticized for the 'arrears' and convinced that there was no prospect

<sup>1</sup> Burgess to Government of India, 27 Jan. 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution no. 5-95-113, 15 Mar. 1886.

<sup>3</sup> Burgess to Government of India, 10 Mar. 1886; P. W. Circular no. 4, 8 Sep. 1886, Home, Arch., Nov. 1886, 5-8.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum by Burgess and Keith in Rev. and Agri., Arch., Apr. 1889, 3. The only outcome of the effort was that the Government agreed to issue a Resolution and Circular, 24-4-2 Arch., Rev. and Agri., 28 Mar. 1889, calling attention of Local Governments to the relevant provisions of the Treasure Trove Act.

<sup>5</sup> These were: two reports by Führer and Smith on N.-W. Provinces; three reports by Rodgers on Panjab; reports by Rea on Kānchi, Mahābalipuram, Hampi, etc.; reports by Burgess on Ahmedabad, Broach, Dholkā, etc.; and reports by Cousens on Chālukya architecture, on Bijāpur and on the architecture of north Gujarat. Memorandum by Burgess, 23 Feb. 1889, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jun. 1890, 1-30.



of liquidating them by the scheduled date, Burgess withdrew from service on the 1st June 1889 to be able to concentrate on the publication-work.<sup>1</sup> For the future arrangement of archaeological work in the country he submitted a plan to the Government, in which he estimated that the survey of south India would need about eight years to complete and that of west India a year's time only, while more than five years' work awaited the archaeologists in each of the four areas into which he would like to see the rest of the country archaeologically divided; viz. Rājputānā with Sind, Panjab, Central India, and the North-Western Provinces with Oudh. Bengal was omitted, as it was considered to have already been satisfactorily surveyed. There was no necessity in his view to maintain an elaborate machinery for carrying on the residuary work, and he suggested the retrenchment of the Director General's office and the reduction of the entire Survey to two independent parties, one working under Cousens and the other under Rea. The Panjab and Bengal Surveys were to be eliminated altogether, and the services of Cousens and Rea were to be made available for operations in the north as soon as they could be spared from the work they had in hand. For the whole of north India he wanted an additional 'architectural archaeologist', who, besides conducting minor surveys, would be responsible for conservation-work. He also urged that Hultzsch should continue to be in charge of south Indian epigraphy, but on an enhanced scale of pay, while Führer should be retained in the North-Western Provinces as a general antiquarian and epigraphist to provide the complement of Hultzsch's work for north India.<sup>2</sup> The scheme received a ready welcome from the Government, who, influenced by the adverse comment of the Finance Committee on the high cost of archaeology, had already agreed in 1888 to a policy of drastic reductions.<sup>3</sup> The new policy led to the virtual disappearance of the Archaeological Survey as a central body and was a reversion to the chaos and disorganization of the pre-Cunningham era. The whole of India was denuded of its archaeological staff, barring two Surveyors in the west and the south, raised now to the status of Superintendents,<sup>4</sup> pursuing their separate aims independently of each other, and a third, Führer, who was entrusted with the vague duties of general antiquarian and epigraphical research and whose relations with the other Surveys remained ill-defined. Even Burgess' proposal for an architect-curator for north India was rejected, and E. W. Smith, whom he had nominated for the post, was placed under Führer as his assistant. Not only the work of conservation but the entire executive direction of survey-operations relapsed into the hands of the Provincial Governments. The only redeeming feature of the new system was the retention of Hultzsch as the Government Epigraphist in Madras for a further term of three years, but his office was made independent of the south Indian survey. Even in this drastically reduced shape the Survey-establishments were sanctioned only for five years (from the 1st October 1890), and Lord Cross, the Secretary of State, while approving of the scheme, expressed the hope that by the end of that period the survey-work would, so far as the Government was concerned, be generally completed.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Burgess to Government of India, 20 Jan. 1888; 17 Oct. 1888; 25 Feb. 1889; 17 Apr. 1889, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Notes, 9, 16, 18, 19, 20 Feb. 1889, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Resolution no. 2-5-60, 5 May 1890; Arch. Desp. to London, 13 May 1890, *ibid.* The total cost of archaeology was estimated to be about Rs. 56,000, which was to be distributed as follows: Cousens's party, Rs. 12,870; Rea's party, Rs. 12,200; Smith's pay, Rs. 3,000; Epigraphy, Rs. 12,700; and publications by Burgess, Rs. 15,000.

<sup>4</sup> Government of India to Madras Government, 27 May 1891, and to Bombay Government, 8 Jun. 1891, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jul. 1891, 35-48.

<sup>5</sup> Desp. no. 50, 10 Jul. 1890, *ibid.*



## 8. TIME OF TROUBLES

Burgess' withdrawal was followed by a period of utter bleakness and gloom, which neither his own attractive publications on the Muhammedan architecture of Gujarat and Ahmedabad nor the brilliant achievements of some of his successors, particularly of Führer at Kankālī Tīlā and of E. W. Smith at Agra and Fatehpur Sikrī could help any way to relieve. Hultzsich continued to make solid contributions to south Indian epigraphy by bringing out more volumes of inscriptions, and, in 1892, on Burgess' giving up the charge of the *Epigraphia Indica*, steps were taken to give it a new lease of life by arranging to issue it under Hultzsich's editorship as a supplement to the *Indian Antiquary*.<sup>1</sup> But the hope of completing the epigraphical programme within the scheduled time seemed as distant as ever, and Hultzsich's term, which expired in 1893, had to be further extended for five years.<sup>2</sup> The outlook for survey and exploration was hardly more encouraging, and there was little prospect of the time-table dictated by Lord Cross being even remotely adhered to. Excavation was accorded a most cavalier treatment, which succeeded in drawing forth spirited protests from scholars of eminence like Hoernle, Grierson and Bühler, who ceaselessly went on urging that thorough and extensive digging was the only means by which India's past history could be placed on a solid and sound basis.<sup>3</sup> Conservation hardly fared better except perhaps in the North-Western Provinces, where, thanks chiefly to the personal initiative of a succession of able Lieutenant Governors, a vigorous repair-programme was being pursued. Listing of monuments continued to be far behind the schedule, and where such lists existed they were often found to be incomplete or defective.<sup>4</sup>

When, at last, in 1895 the Government of India came to take stock of the situation, they were almost frightened by the sheer volume of work remaining to be done. On a suggestion from the Secretary of State they had already made a move to transfer the entire work to the Asiatic Society of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> But the latter having refused to accept the responsibility, the Government were forced to the view that the direction of archaeological work by private enterprise was out of the question, and that the work must be continued by the Government if it was to continue at all. The matter was debated for a considerable time, in the course of which they were able to weigh the views not only of the Provincial Governments<sup>6</sup> but of such learned bodies as the Royal Asiatic Society and of scholars like Tawney, Bühler and Fleet, and it was not until 1898<sup>7</sup> that they were in a position to submit

<sup>1</sup> Rev. and Agri., Arch., May 1892, 59-61; Aug. 1892, 147-171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Jun. 1893, 4-11.

<sup>3</sup> Bühler to Grierson, 9 Nov. 1894; Hoernle to Government of India, 21 Nov. 1894; Grierson to Government of India, 5 Jan. 1895, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jul. 1895, 1-5.

<sup>4</sup> The most significant event which may be recorded about this period took place in 1891, when Sir Charles Close (then a Lieutenant in the Survey of India) suggested that balloons fitted with cameras should be used for photographing archaeological sites near Agra. The scheme, though approved by the Surveyor General of India, eventually produced no more than a few aerial photographs of Calcutta. G. E. Daniel, *A Hundred Years of Archaeology* (London, 1950), p. 295.

<sup>5</sup> Desp. no. 46, 14 May 1891, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jun. 1891, 5-8; Government of India to Asiatic Society of Bengal, 19 Jun. 1894; A. S. B. to Government of India, 5 Jan. 1895, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jan. 1895, 1-5.

<sup>6</sup> E. D. MacLagan's note, 1 Mar. 1895; Ibbetson's note, 12, Apr. 1895; Elgin's Minute, 10 May 1895; Government of India Circular, 27 Jun. 1895 to all Local Governments, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jul. 1895, 6-13.

<sup>7</sup> Rev. and Agri., Arch., Desp. to London, no. 31, 16 Jun. 1898, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jul. 1898, 10-29.



for the consideration of the Secretary of State their final proposals for the re-organization of archaeological work in India. In the scheme that was drawn up, provision was made for five circles with an Archaeological Surveyor in charge of each, viz. Bombay with Sind and Berar; Madras and Coorg; Panjab, Baluchistan and Ajmer; North-Western Provinces and Central Provinces; Bengal and Assam. The machinery of the Central Government being considered unsuitable for executive supervision, the Surveyors were placed under the control of the Local Governments first named in the circle-designations thus devised, while the Survey-expenditure was charged to the Imperial revenues except in the case of Madras, where, since 1890, it had been a provincial charge. The new Survey-Circles were required to devote themselves entirely to conservation-work, which, in the Government's view, was the first aim of archaeology. Excavation they viewed as only a secondary objective, and they announced that the limited funds they were justified in spending should primarily be applied to the preservation of existing materials rather than to the exploration of what was unknown. The new scheme, however, made a much more generous provision for epigraphy, though the Government's original idea had been to keep in abeyance the post of Epigraphist and the publication of the *Epigraphia Indica* and to relegate the work to private enterprise. But the latter view was so strongly contested both by Local Governments and by private authority that it had ultimately to be abandoned. The Madras Government pointed out that Dr. Hultzsch and his staff were the only people living who were able to decipher the old Tamil inscriptions and that epigraphy was not only a subject of scientific interest and importance in which the learned alone were much interested but also one which might throw useful light on many problems of administration. It was therefore decided to make the post of Epigraphist permanent so long as Dr. Hultzsch continued to hold it. But as he was emphatically a specialist in the south Indian inscriptions, the Government proposed to encourage the appointment of Honorary Epigraphists in other provinces and to relax Hultzsch's editorial monopoly by authorizing them to edit inscriptions for publication in the *Epigraphia Indica*.

The whole of the scheme was sanctioned by the Secretary of State on the 18th May 1899.<sup>1</sup> One good feature of it was that it made service in the Archaeological Survey pensionable for all who had joined the Survey before that date.<sup>2</sup> But it suffered from a number of defects. It completely ignored the value of excavation and left all initiative and responsibility in the hands of the Local Governments, particularly in respect of conservation. The Survey was allowed to remain without any kind of leadership whatever.

## 9. THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

A new era dawned for Indian archaeology with the arrival on the scene of Lord Curzon, in whom the intellectual movement set in motion by the provocative writings of Bühler, Hoernle and others found its ablest and most enthusiastic champion. Curzon's attention had been drawn to the problem by Lord Reay as early as November 1898,<sup>3</sup> when he was still in England, and one of his first acts on the assumption of the Viceregal office was to commence a personal study of the operation of the existing system in every province of India. By September 1899 he had gathered enough material to convince him that it was 'impossible to conceive a system more chaotic or futile in practice'. He recorded in

<sup>1</sup> Desp. 114 (Rev.), 18 May 1899.

<sup>2</sup> Arch. Circular 2628-41-6, 2 Aug. 1899.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, 26 Nov. 1898, Rev. and Agri., Arch., Jan. 1901, 5.



a Minute on the 23rd September that 'the whole country is supposed to be divided into five circles with an Archaeological Surveyor for each. The geographical arrangement of these circles is fantastic in the extreme. Sind is lumped together with Bombay and Berar; Baluchistan is tacked on to the Panjab, and Ajmer is casually thrown in. The Central Provinces are added to the North Western Provinces . . . Bengal . . . has no surveyor. The surveyors in the remaining circles, instead of being scholars, or even engineers, are merely, as their name implies—surveyors, who make drawings, and write reports, but can only at a considerable risk be entrusted with the task of renovation or repair.

'In practice, too, the most whimsical difference prevails between the policy adopted in different provinces. No Local Government is *per se* interested in archaeology. It is occupied with grosser and more material concerns. The result is that the progress or suspension of archaeological work, the decay of priceless treasures of art, the restoration, sometimes involving the prostitution of exquisite palaces and halls—all depend upon the taste, or interest, or caprice of the Local Governor, who, if in a few rare cases he exerts himself in the cause of art and good taste, may on the other hand, if he chose, leave an indelible and fatal mark upon the monuments of his province, or more frequently, be content with leaving no mark at all.

'Thus it has come about that owing to the absence of any central and duly qualified advising authority, not merely are beautiful and famous buildings crumbling to decay: but there is neither principle nor unity in conservation or repair, while from time to time horrors are still committed that make the student shudder and turn grey . . .

'The continuance of this state of affairs seems to me little short of a scandal. Were Germany the ruling power in India, I do not hesitate to say that she would be spending many lakhs a year on a task to what we have hitherto rather plumed ourselves on our generosity in devoting Rs. 61,000, raised only a little more than a year ago to 88,000 . . .

'When I reflect upon the sums of money that are gaily dispensed for the construction of impossible forts in impossible places, which are to sustain an impossible siege against an impossible foe, I do venture to hope that so mean a standard may not again be pleaded, at any rate in my time.'

These noble reflections found concrete expression in a set of definite proposals submitted to the Secretary of State on the 20th December 1900, the chief of which was to eliminate the existing lack of responsibility and system. Arguing for the proposals Curzon's Government pointed out that it was indefensible that the Government should divest themselves of all responsibilities for the preservation of monuments, which, in the words of Lord Lytton, were 'for variety, extent, completeness and beauty unsurpassed, perhaps unequalled in the world', and that the Government of India, not the Local Administrations, would always be held in the judgment of the civilized world primarily responsible for maintaining intact this great inheritance. They considered it unsafe to trust that the subordinate governments would always be willing or able under the pressing exigencies of provincial finance to devote funds to it. They were satisfied that the existing Archaeological Surveyors were insufficiently equipped with archaeological, scholarly or professional knowledge to act as independent advisers or investigators and that they required to be guided and controlled if their activities were to lead to any useful results. The Government, therefore, recommended the revival of the post of the Director General, the incumbent of which was to be a trained explorer combining

<sup>1</sup> Letter, 26 Nov. 1898, *Rev. and Agri., Arch.*, Jan. 1901, 5.



archaeological knowledge with engineering skill. He was required to exercise a general supervision over all the archaeological work of the country, whether it was that of excavation, of preservation or of repair, of epigraphy, or of the registration and description of monuments and ancient remains. He would co-ordinate and bring up-to-date the local surveys and reports and should in addition present to Government an annual report of his work. The Government also pressed for an annual sum of a lakh of rupees for a term of years to be expended in grants-in-aid for the archaeological work of special importance and magnitude.

The proposals were sanctioned by the Secretary of State on the 29th November 1901<sup>1</sup> experimentally for a five-year term, and, on a recommendation from the British Museum, John Marshall, who had already worked in Greece, south Turkey and Crete, was selected for filling the new post of Director General.<sup>2</sup> In the Resolution announcing the appointment it was declared that the most important function of the Director General was to secure that the ancient monuments of the country were properly cared for, that they were not utilized for purposes which were inappropriate or unseemly, that repairs were executed when required and that any restorations which might be attempted were conducted on artistic lines. He was to assist the regional Surveyors in ascertaining and formulating the special requirements of each province and to advise the Government of India as to the operations for which subsidies might be allotted from Imperial funds. He was to visit all the circles in succession, succinctly reporting the general results of his tour to the Government of each province visited and offering any suggestion that he might have to make in connexion with the buildings he had inspected. He was, finally, to exercise a professional control over all his colleagues and to maintain a continuous record of the needs of the various provinces and of the action taken to meet them.<sup>3</sup> Although conservation was accorded the first place in the new programme, Lord Curzon was clear-sighted enough to visualize that 'it is in the exploration and study of purely Indian remains, in the probing of the archaic mounds, in the excavation of old Indian cities and in the copying and reading of ancient inscriptions that a good deal of the . . . work of the archaeologists will in future live'. 'Epigraphy', he announced in a speech delivered before the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 6th February 1900, 'should not be set behind research any more than research should be set behind conservation. All are ordered parts of any scientific scheme of antiquarian work. I am not one of those who think that Government can afford to patronize the one and ignore the other. It is, in my judgment, equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher and to cherish and conserve.'

Such then was the mighty task which Curzon had mapped out for the reconstituted Archaeological Survey. It was not all his fault that all the means, in men as well as money, required to implement it, could not be made available to the new Director General, who was in addition burdened with a cumbersome administrative machine derived from an impossible system which it had been the Viceroy's most cherished desire totally to scrap. The actual work of conservation, as in the days of Burgess, was still wholly in the hands of the Provincial Governments, whom the Director General could advise but could not guide. The regional surveyors were under his control only professionally, but administratively they continued to be accountable to the Local Administrations. The picture was indeed very different from what the Viceroy had conceived in his Minutes and speeches. But Curzon had to fight against many heavy odds, and it is not surprising that he failed

<sup>1</sup> Desp. (Rev.) no. 184, 29 Nov. 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Agreement between J. H. Marshall and the Secretary of State, 23 Dec. 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution no. 542-6-11, 21 Feb. 1902.



to overcome many of the prejudices inherited from a long-established tradition. All his colleagues did not see eye to eye with him, and even the authorities in England were strongly opposed to complete centralization. But one should not be squeamish. Curzon may be accused of a number of omissions. But he had fought and won one of the most difficult battles ever waged for Indian archaeology. No other ruler of India before or after him has evinced so single-minded a devotion to the cause of archaeology, and, when all is said, it has to be admitted that he succeeded in rekindling an archaeological conscience in the country and placing the Archaeological Survey of India for the first time on a sound and secure foundation. How this foundation was gradually built upon by the new Director General and a solid and imposing structure came to be raised on it belongs to more recent history and is narrated in the article which follows.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among the significant literature on the early history of Indian archaeology, mention may be made of the following: C. Markham, *Memoir of the Indian Surveys*, 2nd ed. (London, 1878), ch. XV; 'Ancient India', *Quarterly Review* CLXIX (1889); A. Cunningham, *Arch. Surv. Ind.*, I, Introduction; James Gibbs, 'History of Archaeology in India', *Jour. Soc. Arts*, XXXIV (1886), pp. 555 ff.; Gustave le Bon, *Les Civilisations de l'Inde* (Firmin-Didot, Paris, 1887); A. F. Rudolf Hoernle in *Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, chiefly pt. II; G. Bühler, 'Some notes on past and future archaeological explorations in India', *Jour. Roy. Asiatic Soc.*, 1895, pp. 649 ff.; C. E. D. Black, *Memorandum on the Indian Surveys 1875-1890* (London, 1891), ch. XV; 'A short history of the Archaeological Department and its connexion with, and the work done by, the Public Works Department of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh', *An. Prog. Rep. Arch. Surv. Dept. Ind., N.-W. Provinces and Oudh Circle, 1899-1900* (Oct. 1900); T. W. Holderness' unpublished note, 18 Mar. 1899, in *Rev. and Agri., Arch.*, Jan. 1901, 5; J. Marshall in *An. Rep. Arch. Surv. Ind.*, 1902-03 (1904), an abridged version of which appeared in J. Cumming, *Revealing India's Past* (London, 1939), pp. 1-13; J. Burgess, 'Sketch of archaeological research in India during half a century', *Jour. Bombay Branch Roy. Asiatic Soc., The Centenary Memorial Volume* (1905), pp. 131-48; N. P. Chakravarti, 'The story of Indian archaeology', *Archaeology in India* (Delhi, 1950), pp. 1-15.